

IN MEMORY OF STEVEN DAVID ROSE  
16 January 1950 - 12 June 2015

ALLEN LOWRIE • Western Australia • allen.lowrie@bigpond.com

Steve Rose was raised in Bedford Park, a suburb of Perth, Western Australia. He lived opposite the well-missed Phill Mann. As kids they played together in the local swamplands catching frogs and tadpoles as well as admiring the vast number of flora species that abounded in those areas. Through adventures and scuffles, they remained good friends throughout life.

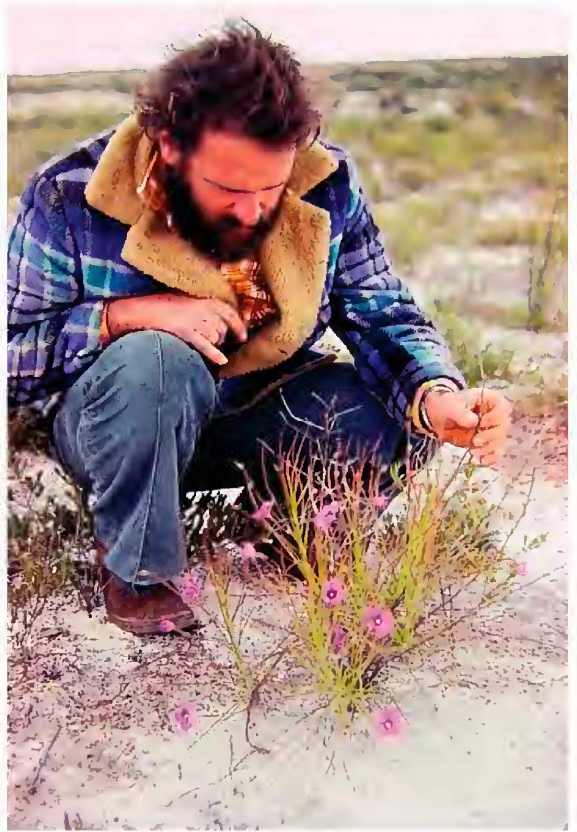
Steve was a keen collector and grower of Australian terrestrial orchids. I first met him at the local orchid society in our teens. With our mutual friend Robert Oliver, we undertook numerous orchid hunts in the bush lands that surrounded Perth. Sharing our collections and growing knowledge with any spare time we had.

As the years went by Steve married Lesley and as a true visionary, lived what we now call “a sustainable lifestyle”. They moved to northern Queensland living in sustainable communities before returning to Perth to live in an early settler’s house on a vineyard in Guilford with Lesley and his daughters Vanessa and Rachael. This is where he built his first greenhouse to house his rapidly growing collection of native terrestrial orchids and beloved Australian carnivorous plants. He and Lesley ran a business growing native plant tube lines that were sold onto nurseries in Perth.

During this time Steve wrote a report that was published in 1973 (CPN vol. 11, no 2, June 1973) when the journal was a humble typewriter set newsletter. He recorded his observations of *Cephalotus* in the wild. Later, Steve focused his research on his passion for pygmy *Drosera*. He can be attributed to many new discoveries about these little gems. It is at this time in the 70’s that Steve and I reconnected and began a long friendship based on our shared passion for carnivorous plants, native flora and fauna, and gold prospecting.

Being a little older and now owning cars that were not “old bangers”, we ventured further afield throughout south west Western Australia. Exploring valleys, slopes, and summits, we drove at walking pace and stopped at each change in soil type. Steve’s botanical method was to walk in a semi-circle out and back to the road side as I did the same on the opposite side of the road. We covered a lot of ground with this surveying method and discovered many new species of carnivorous plants such as pygmy and tuberous *Drosera*.

Through our observations of soil topography, we would soon establish a growing knowledge that a particular soil or mixed soil type such as laterite or white silica sand soils or the mixes of the two



Steve Rose with *Byblis lamellata* at Eneabba, Western Australia in 1980.

soil types and its aspect in relationship to whether it was a valley (wetter soils) or summits (drier soils) or the slopes between (seasonal watersheds experiencing both a sometime wet sometime dry soils) was the key to a particular species preferred habitat. After many years of this survey work, we could both assess what species should be found in a particular area based on the soil type and the position in the landscape.

Steve's inventive mind and powers of observation established a formula to select the right soil types to use when growing carnivorous plants and terrestrial orchids in cultivation. His propagation skills were second to none and established methods to propagate *Cephalotus* plants and pygmy *Drosera* from leaf cuttings.

Steve also grew *Sarracenia* from seed to flower in 18 months. He used lights to extend the day light hours but also kept the pitchers full to the brim with liquid fertilizer applied to the baby pitches with a hypodermic syringe and needle and later when the pitchers were larger by syringe only.

I am grateful for the memories I have from an unforgettable expedition to Sumatra. We traveled from Padang to Lake Toba exploring mountains and roadsides along our way. We were fortunate enough to join up with the *Nepenthes* study husband and wife team from Canada, John Turnbull and Anne Middleton. John had selected some great locations, the highlight of which was Mount Talang, Sumatra, Aia Batumbuak, West Sumatra, Indonesia. It was on this summit where we camped for the night. Just at dusk we heard the sound of a big cat. A tiger in close proximity. We all slept with one eye open that night.

This was not the only danger we were to face. Whilst descending Mount Singgalang vulkaan in Bukittinggi (2878 m) Sumatra, Steve saved Anne's life. The downward trail was greasy with wet and clayey soils. On a steep incline, half way down the summit Anne lost her footing, fell on her back and rapidly skidded down about 30 meters. I yelled out to Steve, who was leading, to grab Anne. He saved her just before she was going over a long-drop cliff face beside the trail. Steve saved Anne's life. It was only after we realized that the cliff wasn't the only thing that could have killed her. As she was carrying a large jungle knife (a bolo) on her back and was lucky that the knife did not find its way into her body as she skidded towards Steve.

The adventures for Steve were just beginning. It was about this time Steve was also getting very interested in the idea of gold prospecting. He recalled tales from his grandfather who was also a gold prospector at the turn of the century. He said he was going to buy one of these new metal detecting machines and try to find gold. I'm sorry to recall that our friend Rob Oliver and I thought this gold quest was nuts! We were soon to eat our words. In 1980 when I was visiting our friend Rob Oliver in California, there on the 60 Minutes show was Steve, Lesley, and his daughters showing the reporter all the gold they had found with their metal detectors. It turns out he was not nuts; he had found gold and lots of it.

Steve and his family soon moved to Kalgoorlie where they continued gold prospecting. Steve made some very good gold discoveries and did business with larger mining companies. He was a self-taught geologist and with his skills recognized he became a professional prospector and was hired to conduct gold surveys between Kalgoorlie and Hopetoun. Principally prospecting in the no man's land region of Forrestania.

Steve's prospecting career took him to the highlands of Papua New Guinea while prospecting for an American mining company. Steve told me this entailed being lowered by helicopter into the jungle where he would gather rock samples and complete area surveys. During these adventures into prospecting, Steve was never far away from his love of plants. He collected New Guinea *Impatiens* seed for Rob Oliver and *Nepenthes* seed for Phill Mann. Steve's prospecting career also took him to China and parts of SE Asia.



Steve was a man with a brilliant mind. As an inventor, he could trouble shoot and engineer all manner of mechanical and electronic machinery. For example, our early Garret metal detectors were awkwardly heavy, and prone for misreading signals, despite being the best in the market in the 1980's. Steve invented a solution by relocating the heavy electronics box to a waist belt position thus reducing the weight of the metal detector and positioning all of the equipment components in a more ergonomic way. He also added a 10-turn Vernier dial modification to the ground-canceling potentiometer to better cope with ground-mineralization signal changes.

Another great life moment afforded to me by Steve was when he invited Rob and me up to the gold fields to have a go at gold detecting for ourselves. With Rob prospecting away in the distance, I took the opportunity to "commune with nature". As I made my way back to Rob's location with detector waving, I managed to unearth a 2/3 of an ounce gold nugget within two paces. As nature calls as they say...Eureka!

I was hooked. Steve and I later became partners in a number of gold tenements and at one stage we owned the tenement known as Webb's Patch near Cue. We found a lot of gold on those tenements and had a lot of good times.

Steve's passing is a sad loss to the horticultural (especially the orchid and carnivorous plant) enthusiasts and the gold mining communities of the world. He will be missed but he will always be remembered by those that knew him closely that he was a great guy and it was a pleasure to be part of his life. Catch you later mate.



**Cascade Carnivores**  
Carnivorous Plant Nursery

**Mexican *Pinguicula***  
- Butterworts are our specialty!

***Utricularia***  
- Terrestrial and epiphytic

***Nepenthes***  
- Highland species/cultivars  
*Drosera, Dionaea, Drosophyllum* and more...

Website - [www.cascadecarnivores.com](http://www.cascadecarnivores.com)  
Email - [support@cascadecarnivores.com](mailto:support@cascadecarnivores.com)  
Phone - 425.336.1420



**CALIFORNIA CARNIVORES**

The Largest Most Famous CP Nursery in North America  
Home of the largest collection of CP in the world on display Thurs. - Mon. 10 Am - 4 Pm  
We ship only the highest quality plants in our deluxe pots to the entire U.S.  
Owned by Peter D'Amato, author of "The Savage Garden"

707-824-0433      [www.CaliforniaCarnivores.com](http://www.CaliforniaCarnivores.com)      [info@californiacarnivores.com](mailto:info@californiacarnivores.com)